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(54) Title: INTERNET BASED ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION REFERRAL SYSTEM

(57) Abstract: A method of publishing a document for a client with the assistance of a channel partner includes providing a document database (155) and receiving from a client's computer (110) a selection of a link to a publication Web site (100) from a channel partner Web site (105) and determining the channel partner. The method further includes creating and transmitting to the client's computer (110) a branded welcome Web page (525), the branded welcome Web page includes one channel partner Web site display attribute (510) and a publish link (540) to the publication Web site (100) or alternatively, a co-branded welcome Web page (525), the co-branded welcome Web page (525) includes at least one channel Web site display attribute (510), a publication Web site logo (530) and the publish link (540) to the publication Web site system. Additionally the method includes electronically receiving the client document, generated by the client's computer (110) and publishing the client document by adding the client document to the documents database (155). The client may also initiate a search of the document database (155) by selecting search link (535) to receive selected documents.

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INTERNET BASED ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION REFERRAL SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to the field of electronic publishing; more specifically, it relates to a method and system for placing documents in a searchable database via the Internet.

BACKGROUND ART

For a Web-based publication site, one of the primary difficulties is finding clients to use the publication services provided by the site. Partnering with a group of established Web sites that potential clients visit regularly and having these Web sites provide a hyper-link to the publication site will overcome this difficulty. This "channel partner" method can be more cost-effective than other means, such as advertising on various media.

Another similar difficulty for a Web-based publication site is winning client trust. Being directed to the publication site by a channel partner site that a client already knows and has established a relationship with relieves this difficulty to a great extent. This problem is further relieved when the publication site can emulate, to a certain extent, the "look and feel", of the channel partner Web site.

From the client point of view, similar difficulties exist. Potential clients generally do not know how or where to publish, so getting "channeled" to the publication Web site makes it easier.

Examples of channel partner sites might be sites specializing in ballooning, or car restoration, or one for bicycle enthusiasts. The publication Web site provides the ability to search for documents as well as publish documents. While the channel partner site itself may not have the capability large volume publication, the publication Web site does. Further, there may be several bicycle channel partner Web sites, so the publication Web site generally has more documents available than any individual bicycle channel partner (or non-partner) Web site, if a client wanted to search the publication Web site to see what has already been published.

Another potential group of channel partners are those dealing with intellectual property. Clients of this group of channel partners have difficulty getting defensive publications in view of the public.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

The present invention provides a method and system of publishing documents for a client with the assistance of a channel partner using the Internet. The publishing entity is a publication Web site. The system is implemented in part by software that runs on the publication Web site. Clients access the site through the channel partner Web site. The publication Web site uses one or more display attributes of the channel partner Web site so as to have the "look and feel" of the channel partner Web site.

A first aspect of the present invention is a method for publishing a document for a client with the assistance of a channel partner. The method includes providing a publication Web site system having a document database and computer system for creating and transmitting to a client's computer a branded welcome Web page or a co-branded welcome Web page. The branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a publish link to said publication Web site system. The co-branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute, a publication Web site logo and a publish link to said publication Web site system. The computer system can electronically add one or more client documents to the document database. In response to the client selecting a link to the publication Web site system from a channel partner Web site, the channel partner is determined and a branded welcome Web or said co-branded welcome Web page is created and transmitted to the client's computer. In response to the client selecting the publish link to the publication Web site from the branded welcome Web page, a branded publish Web page, including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute, is transmitted to the client's computer. In response to the client selecting the publish link to the publication Web site from the co-branded welcome Web page, a co-branded publish Web page, including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and the publication Web site logo is transmitted to the client's computer.

A second aspect of the present invention is a method for searching documents for a client with the assistance of a channel partner. The method includes providing a publication Web site system having a document database and a computer system for creating and transmitting to a client's computer a branded welcome Web page or a co-branded welcome Web page. The branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a publish link to said publication Web site system. The co-branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute, a publication Web site logo and a publish link to said publication Web site system. The computer system can electronically search the document database for the client. In response to the client selecting a link to the publication Web site system from a channel partner Web site, the channel partner is determined and a branded welcome Web or said co-branded welcome Web page is created and transmitted to the client's computer. In response to the client selecting the search link to the publication Web site from the branded welcome Web page, a branded search Web page, including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute, is transmitted to the client's computer. In response to the client selecting the search link to the publication Web site from the co-branded welcome Web page, a co-branded publish Web page, including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and the publication Web site logo, is transmitted to the client's computer.

A third aspect of the present invention is a system for publishing documents for a client with the assistance of a channel partner. The system includes a document database and a computer system for creating and transmitting to a client's computer a branded welcome Web page or a co-branded welcome Web page. The branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and function-specific links to the publication Web site system. The function specific links include a search link and a publish link. The co-branded welcome Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute, a publication Web site logo, and the function-specific links to said publication Web site system. The computer system further includes means for the client to electronically add one or more client documents to said document database, means for responding to the client selecting a link to said publication Web site system from a channel partner Web page, and means for creating and transmitting to the

client's computer the branded welcome Web page or the co-branded welcome Web page. The system responds to a client's selection of links as follows. In response to the client selecting the search link to the publication Web site system from the branded welcome Web page, the system transmits to the client's computer a branded search Web page that includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute. In response to the client selecting the search link to the publication Web site system from the co-branded welcome Web page, the system transmits to the client's computer a co-branded search Web page. The co-branded search Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and the publication Web site logo. In response to the client selecting the publish link to the publication Web site system from the branded welcome Web page, the system transmits to the client's computer a branded publish Web page that includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute. In response to the client selecting the publish link to the publication Web site system from the co-branded welcome Web page, the system transmits to the client's computer a co-branded publish Web page. The co-branded publish Web page includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and the publication Web site logo.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a high-level schematic drawing of the major components of a web-based publication system for practicing the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of the components of the publication Web site of the present invention;

FIG. 3 illustrates a URL format used by a channel partner to create a referral link to the publication Web site according to the present invention;

FIG. 4 is flow diagram illustrating a co-branded transfer sequence from a channel partner Web site to the publication Web site according to the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a flow diagram illustrating a co-branded search sequence of the publication Web site by a client according to the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a flow diagram illustrating a client document co-branded publication sequence according to the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a flow diagram illustrating publication compensation tracking according to the present invention;

FIG. 8 is a screen display of a channel partner Web page having a link to the publication Web site;

FIG. 9 is a screen display illustrating a welcome co-branded publication Web site Web page;

FIG. 10 is a screen display illustrating a search co-branded publication Web site Web page;

FIG. 11 is a screen display illustrating a search results co-branded publication Web site Web page;

FIG. 12 is a screen display illustrating a retrieved document co-branded publication Web site Web page;

FIG. 13 is a screen display illustrating a co-branded publication Web site Web page for client entry of publication data; and

FIG. 14 is a screen display illustrating a co-branded publication Web site Web page confirming publication of a client document.

BEST MODES FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of electronic publishing; more specifically, it relates to a method and system for placing documents in a searchable database via the Internet.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

The following terms and acronyms are used throughout the detailed description:

Server. A program which responds to a request from another program, typically a Web browser, in a distributed system in which a program at one site sends a request to a program at another site and waits for a response. Typically the server responds by transmitting Web pages.

Web browser. A program which sends requests to another program in a distributed system in which a program at one site sends a request to a program at another site and waits for a response. Typically the Web browser receives Web pages from the server.

Hyperlink. A navigational link from one document to another. Typically, a hyperlink is displayed as an underlined word or phrase that can be selected by clicking on it using a mouse, which causes the Web browser to display the linked document.

Internet. A collection of interconnected public and/or private networks that are linked together by a set of standard protocols such as TCP/IP and HTTP, to form a global, distributed network. The term "Internet" is also intended to encompass changes and additions to existing standard protocols that may be made in the future.

World Wide Web ("Web"). A distributed collection of interlinked, user-viewable hypertext documents, commonly referred to as Web documents or Web pages, that are accessible via the Internet. Currently, the primary standard protocol for allowing applications to locate and acquire Web documents is HTTP, and the Web pages are encoded using HTML. The term "Web" is also intended to encompass changes and additions to existing standard protocols that may be made in the future.

Web Site. A computer system for serving informational content over a network using the standard protocols of the World Wide Web. Typically, a Web site corresponds to a particular Internet domain name, such as "IP.COM," and includes the content associated with a particular organization. As used herein, the term is generally intended to encompass both the hardware/software server components that serve the informational content over the network, and additional hardware/software components, including any non-standard or specialized components, that interact with the server components to perform services for Web site users.

HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language). Computer software codes for attaching presentation and linking attributes to informational content within documents. Documents sent to the Web browser contain HTML codes (referred to as "tags") embedded within the informational content of the document. When the Web document (or HTML document) is subsequently received by a Web browser, the codes are interpreted by the browser and used to parse and display the document. Additionally HTML tags can be used to create links to other Web documents (commonly referred to as "hyperlinks").

HTTP (HyperText Transport Protocol). The standard World Wide Web protocol used for the exchange of information (such as HTML documents, and Web browser requests

for such documents) between a browser and a Web server. HTTP includes a number of different types of messages which can be sent from the client to the server to request different types of server actions. For example, a "GET" message, which has the format GET, causes the server to return the document or file located at the specified URL.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator). A unique address which fully specifies the location of a file or other resource on the Internet. The general format of a URL is protocol://machine address:port/path/filename. The port specification is optional

Branded Web page. A Web page having at least one of the display attributes of a channel partner's Web page.

Co-branded Web page. A Web page having at least one display attribute of a channel partner's Web page and a publication Web site logo.

Web-based Publication System

FIG. 1 is a high-level schematic drawing of the major components of a web-based publication system for practicing the present invention. Publication system 50 includes a publication Web site 100, a channel partner Website 105, and a client computer 110, all linked together by an Internet 115. Channel partner Web site 105 includes a channel partner Web server 120 linked to a channel partner database 125 through channel partner computer program 130. A channel partner is an organization having a Web site that has agreed to use and/or direct clients to publication Web site 100. Direction of clients from channel partner website 105 to publication Web site 100 is through hyperlinks in the channel partner's Web pages. At least one document in channel partner database 125 includes an embedded hyperlink to publication Web site 100.

Publication Web site 100 includes a publication Web site Web server 135 linked to publication Web site computer program 140. Computer program 140, which may be several individual programs, controls access to a channel partner display property database 145, a publication Web site web page forms database 150, a publication Web site document database 155, and a publication Web site accounts database 160. Channel partner display property database 145 includes such display attribute information as the logo, the colors, layout, font styles, and brand type of the channel partner and has been supplied to the publication Web site by the channel partner. The brand type indicates

whether to use branded or co-branded HTML documents. Publication site web page forms database 150 contains "framework" HTML code necessary to carry out the functions of publication Web site 100. Display attributes and data are added to these forms to create HTML documents that are sent to the client. Publication site document database 155 contains all the "published" documents available for search by clients. Publication site accounts database 160 contains client and partner data such as credit card numbers, billing information, and commission formulas. Publication site computer program 140 also combines information, as needed, contained in display properties database 145, publication Web site HTML Web page forms database 150, publication Web site document database 155, and publication Web site accounts database 160 to create Web pages to be sent to client computer 110.

Client computer 110 includes a client Web browser 165 and client document files 170.

In operation, the client, using client computer 110, accesses channel partner Web site 105 through Web browser 165, which may be any standard Web browser such as Microsoft's Internet ExplorerTM or Netscape's Netscape NavigatorTM or Netscape COMMUNICATORTM, that use the HTTP protocol to communicate with channel partner Web server 120. Channel partner Web server 120 sends a HTML document, which includes a hyperlink to publication Web site 100. When the client clicks the hyperlink to the publication Web site on client computer 110, the client computer is automatically connected to publication Website 100 and an HTML document outlining various options, herein referred to as a welcome Web page, is transmitted from publication Web site Web server 135 to client Web browser 165. As illustrated and described below, the HTML documents sent to client computer 110 will have the one or more of the attributes of the channel partner Web site, though it will be the publication Web site that client computer 110 is communicating with. Examples of channel partner display attributes include the channel partner's logo, colors, graphics, or layout. This gives each document sent from the publication Web site 100 to client computer 110 the "look and feel" of channel partner Web site 105. Using only the channel partner's display attributes in an HTML document is an example of a private labeled or branded document. A second, and preferred type of HTML document to be sent to client computer 110 from publication

Web site 100 is a co-branded document. Simply, this means that the publication Web site logo will be added to all HTML documents in addition to the channel partner display properties discussed above. The publication Web site logo can include colors, layouts, or graphic features in addition to or in place of an actual logo. Thus the "look and feel" of the channel partners Web site 105 is combined with the "look and feel" of publication Web site 100 on documents sent from the publication Web site 100 to client computer 110.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of the components of the publication Web site of the present invention. FIG. 2 illustrates in more detail the programs of publication Web site computer 140. Publication Web site computer 140 includes a send/receive program 175 linking an assemble HTML page document program 180, a search program 185, a send documents program 190, and a store documents program 195 together. Publication Web site computer program 140 also includes an accounting program 200. Accounting program 200 is linked to store documents program 195 and publication Web site accounts database 160. Send/receive program 175 routes information between send/receive program 175, assemble HTML document program 180, search program 185, send documents program 190, store documents program 195, and publication Web site Web server 135. Store documents program 195 routes information to accounting program 200 when a document is published and places the document in publication Web site document database 155. Also included in publication Web site computer program 140 is decode program 205 linked to assemble HTML page document program 180. While the various programs are illustrated and described as individual programs performing specific functions, these functions may be combined into one program or a set of multi-function programs. It is also possible that certain programs and databases may actually reside on different Web sites linked together. For example search program 185 and a copy of Web site publication document database 155 may reside on a linked Web site.

Assemble Web page HTML document program 180 assembles a private label (branded) or co-branded HTML document using data stored in display properties database 145 and publication Web site web page forms database 150. Decode program 205 determines the channel partner in order that the correct channel partner display properties can be retrieved from display properties database 145. The proper Web page

form is selected based upon the type of request received from client computer 110. Form types include a welcome Web page, a search criteria Web page, a search results Web page, a requested document Web page, a publish client document Web page, and a confirmation of publish Web page. Send/receive program 175 also adds the appropriate additional information based on the client request, selected from publication Web site document database 155 by search program 185, send documents program 190, or store documents program 195. Not all requests require additional information. For example the welcome Web page and search criteria Web page require no additional information after they are assembled.

With continuing reference to FIG. 2, search program 185 performs the function of searching publication Web site document database 155 based on client search criteria and returns the matching results. Send documents program 190 performs the function of retrieving requested documents stored in publication Web site document database 155. This function fulfills the requirement of a "published document," that of it being publicly available and searchable (an end-user being able to print the document on his or her own computer). Optionally, publication document database 155 may comprise two databases, the first containing the documents in searchable form and the second containing the documents in retrievable form, thereby allowing for more efficient search and retrieval operations.

Store document program 195 performs the function of receiving client documents, time/date stamping them, and adding them to publication Web site document database 155. The time/date stamp sets the "date of publication" for the client document. Time/date stamping may be performed using the services of a third party specializing in time/date stamping. For example, Surety.Com provides a time/date stamping service. Generally a unique publication Web site document number will be assigned. Store document program 195 also notifies the client using client computer 110 that his or her document has been "published", and passes channel partner, client, client document number, and document database information to accounting program 200. If a fee is charged for adding a client document to publication Web site document database 155, payment may be required before publication. Accounting program 200 performs the proper client/channel partner billing and/or channel partner compensation accounting.

Actual monetary transactions may be through a third party specializing in monetary transactions. Publication site accounts database 160 is used to store accounting information.

FIG. 3 illustrates a URL format used by a channel partner to create a referral link to the publication Web site according to the present invention. This format is recognized by decode program 205 on publication Web site 100 described above. URL 210 includes publication Web site link portion 215 and a unique channel partner ID portion 220. Publication Web site link portion 215 directs the client to publication Web site 100 and channel partner ID portion 220 allows Web site 100 software to determine the channel partner.

FIG. 4 is flow diagram illustrating a co-branded transfer sequence from a channel partner Web site to the publication Web site according to the present invention. In step 300, the client logs onto channel partner Web site 105. In step 305, client computer 110 receives a channel partner Web page containing embedded URL link 210 to publication Web site 100. In step 310, the client clicks on embedded URL link 210 and the request is transmitted to publication Web site 100 by client computer 110. In step 315, the channel partner ID is decoded. Next, in step 320, the channel partner's display properties are retrieved. Then in step 325, the welcome form is retrieved and in step 330, a co-branded welcome Web page HTML document assembled. The brand type attribute in the channel partner display property is assumed to be set to co-brand for the purposes of describing the operation of publication Web site as illustrated in FIG. 4 as well as illustrated in FIGs. 5 and 6 and described below. Next, in step 335, the co-branded welcome page having a search hyperlink and a publish hyperlink is sent to client computer 110. In step 340 the client may select either the search hyperlink or the publish hyperlink. Clicking the search hyperlink on client computer 110 in step 345 initiates a series of search related events illustrated in FIG. 5 and described below. Clicking the publish hyperlink on client computer 110 in step 350 initiates a series of publish related events illustrated in FIG. 6 and described below.

FIG. 5 is a flow diagram illustrating a co-branded search sequence of the publication Web site by a client according to the present invention. In step 355, the search form is retrieved and in step 360, a co-branded search Web page HTML document

is assembled. Next, in step 365, the co-branded Web search page HTML document is sent to client's computer 110. Next, in step 370, the client fills in his or her search criteria using client computer 110 and clicks "search". In step 375 the search is completed at publication Web site 100.

In step 380, the search result form is retrieved and in step 385, a co-branded search result Web page HTML document is assembled. Next, in step 390, matching document titles and document hyperlinks are retrieved from publication Web site database 155 and embedded into the search result Web page HTML document. Then, in step 395, the co-branded search result Web page HTML document is sent to client computer 110. Next, in step 400, the client clicks the hyperlink to the document desired.

In step 405 the selected document is retrieved from publication Web site database 155. In step 410, the requested document form is retrieved and in step 415, a co-branded get requested document Web page HTML document assembled. Next, step 420 the get requested document is retrieved from publication Web site database 155 and embedded into the requested document Web page HTML document. Then, in step 425, the co-branded requested document Web page HTML document is sent to client's computer 110. Next, in step 430, the client may save or print the document using client Web browser 165 "save", "save as", and "print" features. The client can get another selected document by using the navigational controls of client Web browser 165, specifically the "back" feature to return to the co-branded search result Web page HTML document and click another document hyperlink.

FIG. 6 is a flow diagram illustrating a client document co-branded publication sequence according to the present invention. In step 435, the publish form is retrieved and in step 440, a co-branded publish Web page HTML document assembled. Next, in step 445, the co-branded Web search page HTML document is sent to client's computer 110. Next, in step 450, the client uses client computer 110 to fill in the required information (illustrated in FIG. 13, and described below), especially location information for the document he or she wants to publish and search criteria, and clicks "upload". In step 455 the client document is received at publication Web site 100, time/date stamped, and added to publication Web site database 155.

In step 460, the confirmation of publish form is retrieved and in step 465, a co-branded confirmation of publish Web page HTML document assembled. Next, in step 470, the co-branded Web confirmation page HTML document is sent to client's computer 110. The client can publish another selected document by using the navigational controls of client Web browser 165, specifically the "back" feature to return to the publish Web page HTML document and uploads another document. Or, the client may use the navigational controls of client Web browser 165 to access any other features of publication Web site 100.

If a private (branded) label presentation of publication Web site 100 Web pages as opposed to the co-branded presentation described above is desired, the steps are virtually the same, except the publication Web site logo will not be added to the HTML documents transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 7 is a flow diagram illustrating publication fee and compensation tracking according to the present invention. In step 475 a fee structure is determined from the publication Web site accounts database 160 that also stores fee/commission structures by channel partner and/or client. Three fee structures are possible. In a first fee structure the channel partner pays the publication fee. In a second fee structure, the client pays the publication fee and the channel partner receives a commission. In a third fee structure, the client pays the publication fee.

If the fee structure is of the first type, step 480 is performed. In step 480, the publication fee is charged to the channel partner. Information, which may include fee, document number, document title, channel partner name, and client name, is recorded in publication Web site accounts database 160. In step 485 fee and payee information is sent to a payment system.

If the fee structure is of the second type, step 490 is performed. In step 490, the publication fee is charged to the client and a commission determined for the channel partner. Information, which may include fee, document number, document title, channel partner name, and client name, is recorded in publication Web site accounts database 160. In step 485 fee and payee information is sent to a payment system.

If the fee structure is of the third type, step 495 is performed. In step 495, the publication fee is charged to the client. Information, which may include fee, document

number, document title, channel partner name, and client name, is recorded in publication Web site accounts database 160. In step 485 fee and payee information is sent to a payment system.

FIG. 8 is a screen display of a channel partner Web page 500 having a channel link to the publication Web site. Channel partner Web page 500 illustrates a typical channel partner Web page within which a client will find a channel hyperlink 520 to publication Web site 100. Channel partner Web page 500 includes, for example, a channel partner name 505 and a channel partner logo 510. Channel partner Web page 500 further includes a set of hyperlinks 515 to other Web pages within channel partner Web site 105 or to other external sites. Other specific channel partner display property attributes described above may be present as well. When the client clicks on channel hyperlink 520, a welcome Web page 525 (illustrated in FIG. 9 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 9 is a screen display illustrating a welcome co-branded publication Web site Web page 525. Welcome Web page 525 has many if not all of the same display property attributes as channel partner Web page 500 in that, in this example, it includes channel partner logo 510 and channel partner name 505. Other specific channel partner display property attributes described above may be present as well. This will be true of FIGs. 10 through 14 as well. Welcome Web page 525 also includes a publication Web site logo 530, a search hyperlink 535, and a publish hyperlink 540. If the client, using client computer 110, clicks on search hyperlink 535, a search criteria Web page 545 (illustrated in FIG. 10 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 105.

FIG. 10 is a screen display illustrating a search co-branded publication Web site Web page 545. Search criteria Web page 545 includes a search criteria text box 550 for entry of search criteria such as key words, author name, company name, date, or combinations thereof. Search criteria text box 550 may be organized into a set of sub-text boxes, each sub-text box for entry of specific search criteria types. Search criteria Web page 545 also includes a submit search button 555. If the client clicks on submit search button 555, a search results Web page 560 (illustrated in FIG. 11 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 11 is a screen display illustrating a search results co-branded publication Web site Web page 560. Search result Web page 560 includes a search result box 565. Search result box 565 contains a set of matching hyper linked document titles 570. The document titles are hyperlinks to the document in publication Web site document database 155. If the client, using client computer 110, clicks on one of document hyperlinks in the set of matching titles 570, a requested document Web page 580 (illustrated in FIG. 12 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 12 is a screen display illustrating a retrieved document co-branded publication Web site Web page 580. Requested document Web page 580 includes a document display box 582 for displaying the requested document. Also illustrated in FIG. 12 are client Web browser 165 control and navigation buttons. These control and navigation buttons include a "print" button 585 for printing the displayed document, a "save" button 590 for saving the displayed document, and a "back" button which the client can use to return to search result Web page 560.

Returning to FIG. 9, if the client clicks on publish hyperlink 540, a publish Web page 600 (illustrated in FIG. 13 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 13 is a screen display illustrating a co-branded publication Web site Web page for client entry of publication data. Publish Web page 600 includes a client name text box 605, a client address text box 610, a client email text box 615, a client phone number text box 620 and a client billing information text box 625. Publish Web page 600 also includes a document title text box 630 for the client to enter the title of the client document to be published, a published by text box 635 for the client, using client computer 110, to enter an author and/or company name, and a file location text box 640 for the client to enter the location of the client document to be published. If published by text box 635 is left blank (another convention, for example typing in "NONE" may be used) then the client document will be published anonymously. Typically the client document location is a path/filename on a storage drive on client computer 105.

Publishing, according to the present invention, is synonymous with adding the client document to publication Web site document database 155. "Publishing" starts

when the client, using client computer 110, clicks upload button 645. After publication is complete, confirmation of publish Web page 650 (illustrated in FIG. 14 and described below) from publication Web site 100 will be transmitted to client computer 110.

FIG. 14 is a screen display illustrating a co-branded publication Web site Web page confirming publication of a client document. Confirmation of publish document Web page 650 includes a client document title display box 655, a published by display box 660, a date of publication display box, 665, a hyperlink 670 to the published client document in publication Web site document database 155, and a display box 675 for displaying a publication number assigned by publication Web site 100. Also illustrated in FIG. 14 are client Web browser 165 control and navigation buttons. These control and navigation buttons include a "print" button 585, for printing confirmation of publish document Web page 650, a "save" button 590 for saving confirmation of publish document Web page 650, and a "back" button 595 which the client can use to return to publish Web page 600.

If a private (branded) label presentation of publication Web site 100 Web pages as opposed to the co-branded presentation described above is desired, the Web pages are virtually the same, except the publication Web site logo 530 will not be added to the HTML documents transmitted to client computer 110.

The description of the embodiments of the present invention is given above for the understanding of the present invention. It will be understood that the invention is not to the particular embodiments described herein, but is capable of various modifications, rearrangements and substitutions will now become apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention. Therefore it is intended that the following claims cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A method of publishing a client document for a client with the assistance of a channel partner, the method comprising the steps of:
 - providing a searchable document database and a publication Web site in communication with said document database;
 - providing a channel link to said publication Web site on a channel partner Web site;
 - receiving from a client's computer a selection of said channel link;
 - determining said channel partner;
 - creating and transmitting to said client's computer a branded welcome Web page, said branded welcome Web page including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a publish link;
 - electronically receiving said client document transmitted by said client's computer; and
 - publishing said client document by adding said client document to said document database.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page further including a publication Web site logo.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - receiving from said client's computer a selection of said publish link; and
 - creating and transmitting to said client's computer a branded publish Web page including said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page further including a publication Web site logo, and said branded publish Web page is a co-branded publish Web page further including said publication Web site logo.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
charging said client a fee for each said client document added to said document database.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of:
calculating and storing a commission amount for said channel partner based on said charged fee.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
charging said channel partner a fee for each said client document added to said document database.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
providing a channel partner database, said channel partner database including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a brand type attribute; and
reading said brand type attribute of said channel partner from said channel partner database;
wherein said step of creating said branded welcome Web page is carried out based on said brand type attribute.
9. The method of step 8, wherein said branded welcome Web page is created by combining said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute with a welcome Web page form.
10. The method of step 8, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page created by combining said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute with a welcome Web page form and a publication Web site logo.

11. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:
 - providing a channel partner database, said channel partner database including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a brand type attribute; and
 - reading said brand type attribute of said channel partner from said channel partner database;
 - wherein said step of creating said branded publish Web page is carried out based on said brand type attribute.
12. The method of step 11, wherein said branded publish Web page is created by combining said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute with a publish Web page form.
13. The method of step 11, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page created by combining said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute with a publish Web page form and a publication Web site logo.
14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 - creating and transmitting to said client's computer a branded confirmation of publish Web page including said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.
15. The method of claim 14, wherein said branded confirmation of publish Web page is a co-branded confirmation of publish Web page further including a publication Web site logo.

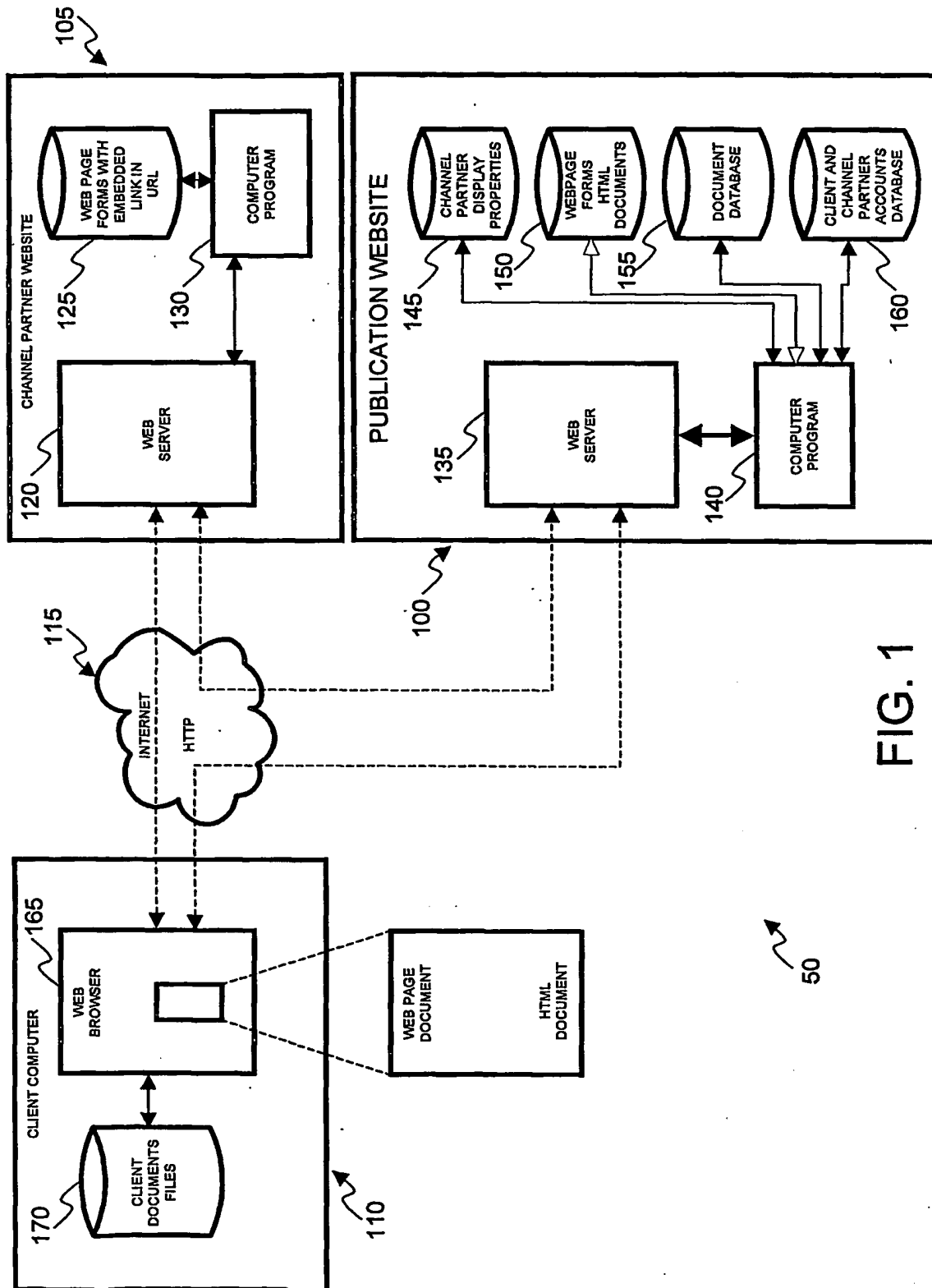
16. A method of searching documents for a client with the assistance of a channel partner, the method comprising the steps of:
 - providing a searchable document database having a plurality of documents and a publication Web site in communication with said document database;
 - providing a channel link to said publication Web site on a channel partner Web site;
 - receiving from a client's computer a selection of said channel link;
 - determining said channel partner;
 - creating and transmitting to said client's computer a branded welcome Web page, said branded welcome Web page including at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a search link;
 - receiving a search request transmitted by said client's computer; and
 - searching said document database to locate documents in accordance with said search request.
17. The method of claim 16, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page further including a publication Web site logo.
18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of:
 - receiving from said client's computer a selection of said search link; and
 - creating and transmitting to said client's computer a branded search Web page including said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein said branded welcome Web page is a co-branded welcome Web page further including a publication Web site logo, and said branded search Web page is a co-branded search Web page further including said publication Web site logo.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said search request comprises search criteria entered from said branded search Web page, and the method further comprises the step of:
- transmitting to said client's computer a branded search results Web page including a list of matching documents located from said document database and said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.
21. The method of claim 20, wherein said branded search results Web page is a co-branded search results Web page further including a publication Web site logo.
22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of:
- receiving from said client's computer a selection of one or more documents from said list of matching documents; and
- transmitting said one or more selected to said client's computer.
23. A Web based system for publishing a client document with the assistance of a channel partner, the system comprising:
- a searchable document database;
- a channel partner database for storing information regarding channel partners in said Web based system;
- a publication Web site in communication with said document database and said channel partner database;
- a channel partner Web site linked to said publication Web site by a channel link through which a client computer is connected to said publication Web site;
- said publication Web site including means for determining said channel partner and creating a branded publish Web page based on information in said channel partner database relating to said channel partner, and transmitting said branded publish Web page to said client computer;
- whereby a client uploads said client document from said client computer to said document database by interfacing with said branded publish Web page.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein said information in said channel partner database includes at least one channel partner Web site display attribute and a brand type attribute.
25. The system of claim 24, wherein said branded publish Web page includes said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.
26. The system of claim 24, wherein said branded publish Web page is a co-branded publish Web page further including a publication Web site logo.
27. The system of claim 23, further comprising a payment system in communication with said publication Web site for charging a fee for adding said client document to said document database.
28. The system of claim 27, wherein said fee is charged to said client.
29. The system of claim 28, wherein said publication Web site includes means for determining and storing a commission for compensating said channel partner based on said charged fee.
30. The system of claim 27, wherein said fee is charged to said channel partner.
31. The system of claim 24, further comprising:
 - means for creating a branded search Web page based on information in said channel partner database relating to said channel partner and transmitting said branded search Web page to said client computer;
 - whereby a client uploads a search request from said client computer to said publication Web site by interfacing with said branded search Web page.
32. The system of claim 31, wherein said branded search Web page includes said at least one channel partner Web site display attribute.

33. The system of claim 31, wherein said branded search Web page is a co-branded search Web page further including a publication Web site logo.
34. The system of claim 31, further comprising:
- means for searching said document database to locate documents in accordance with said search request; and
 - means for creating a branded search results Web page based on information in said channel partner database relating to said channel partner and transmitting said branded search results Web page to said client computer.
35. The system of claim 34, further comprising:
- means for transmitting documents listed in said branded search results Web page and chosen by said client to said client computer.

1/14



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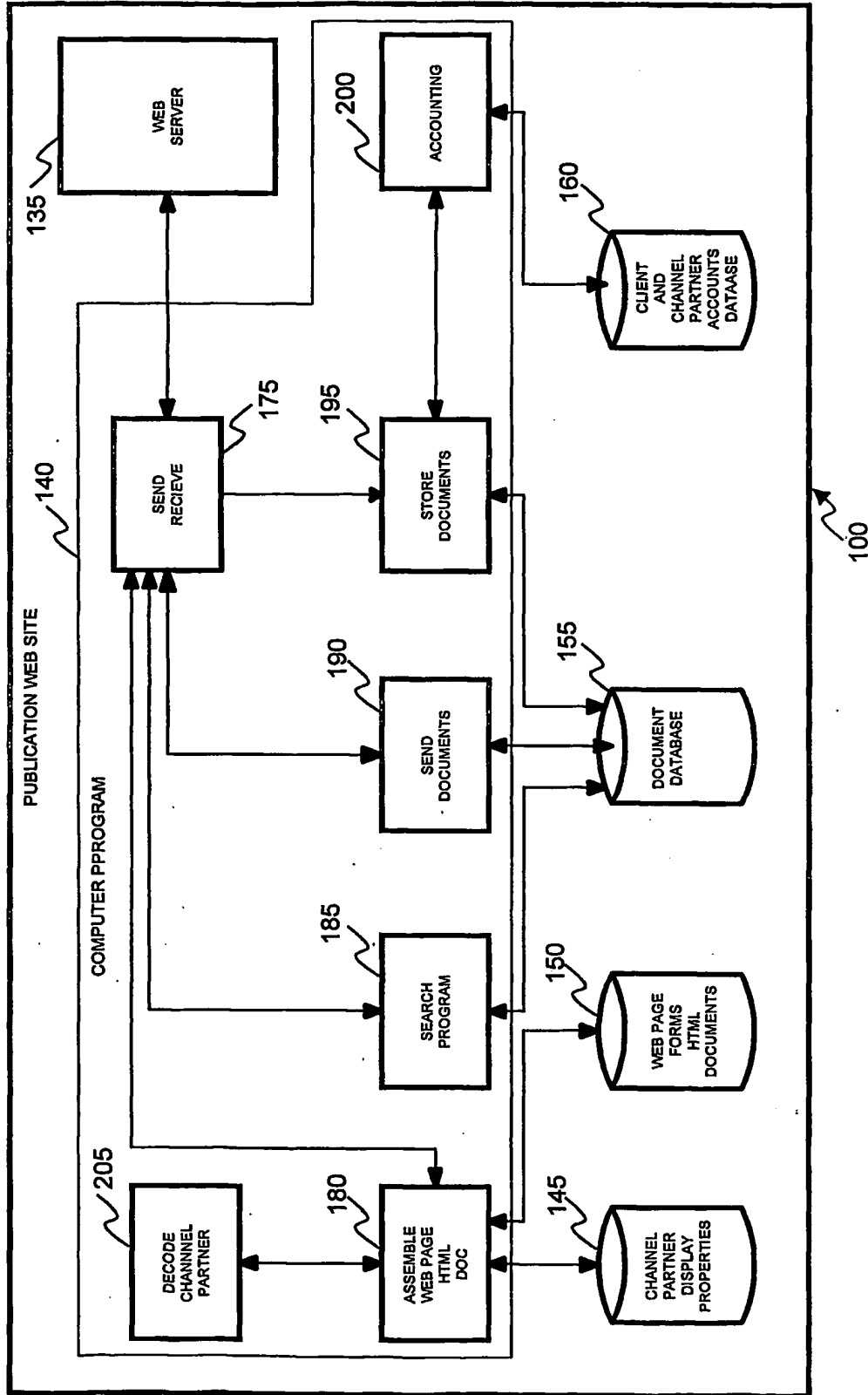


FIG. 2

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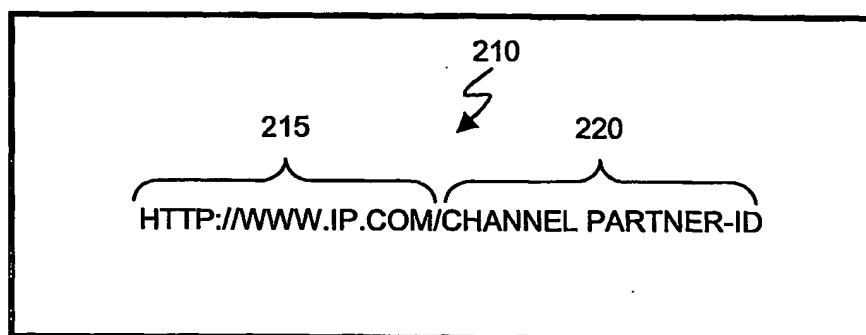


FIG. 3

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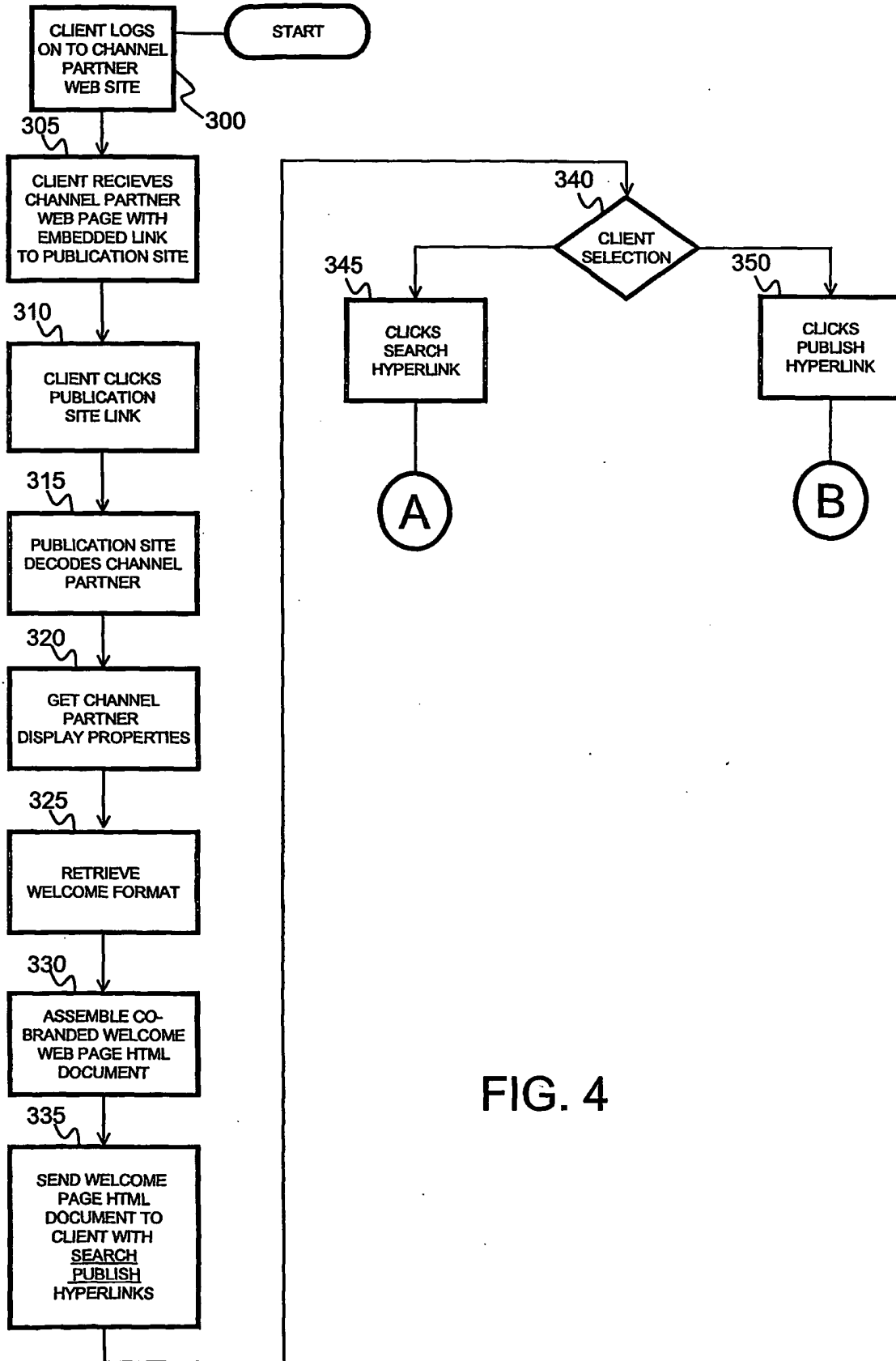


FIG. 4

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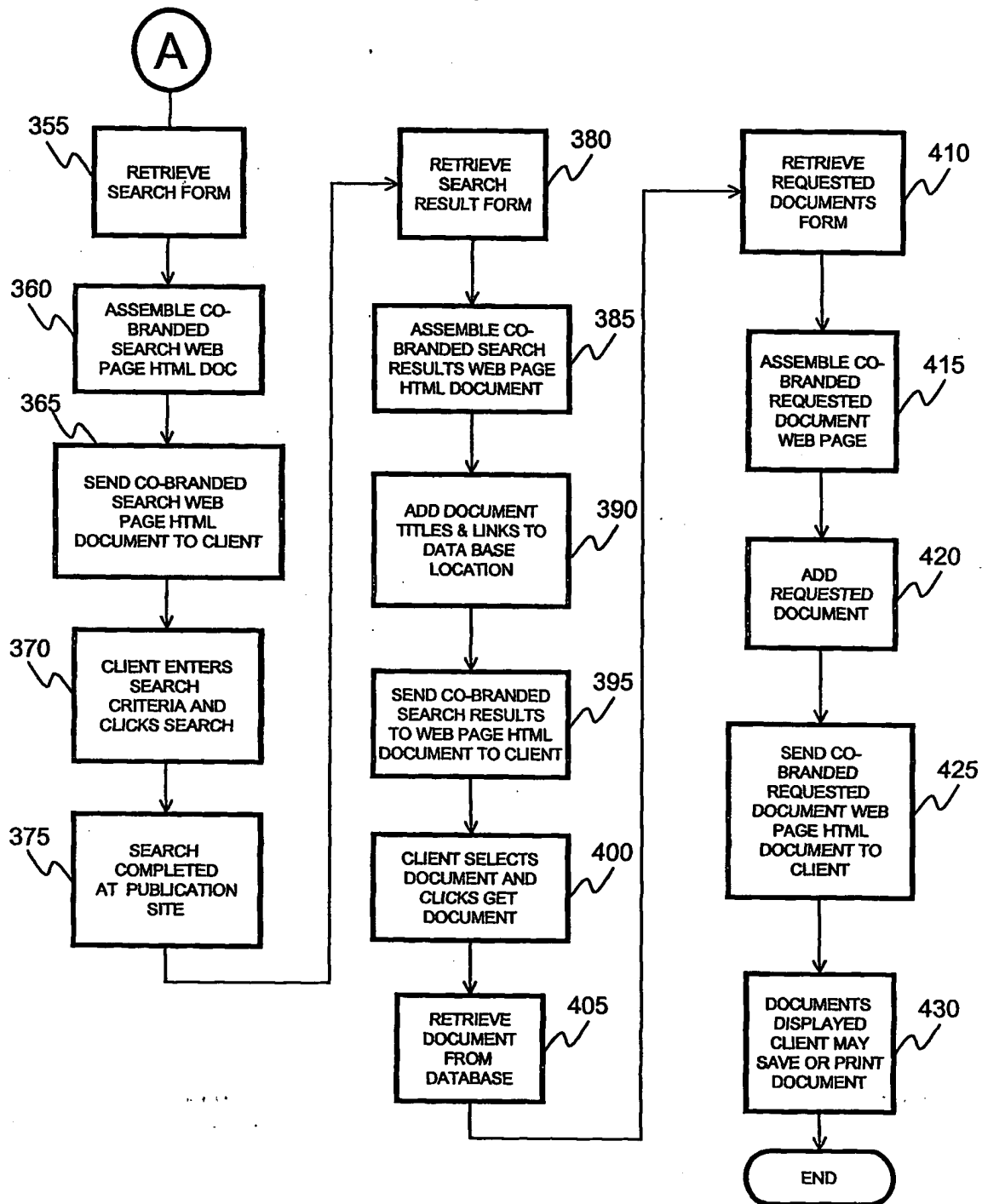


FIG. 5

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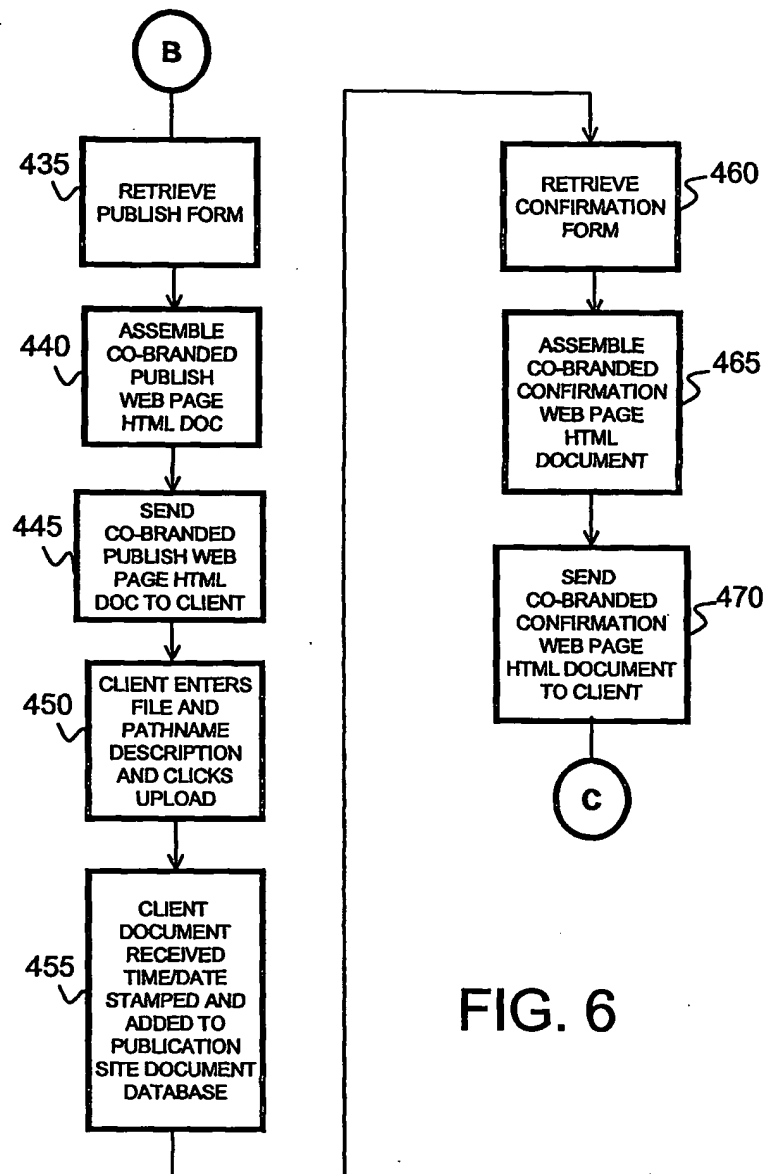


FIG. 6

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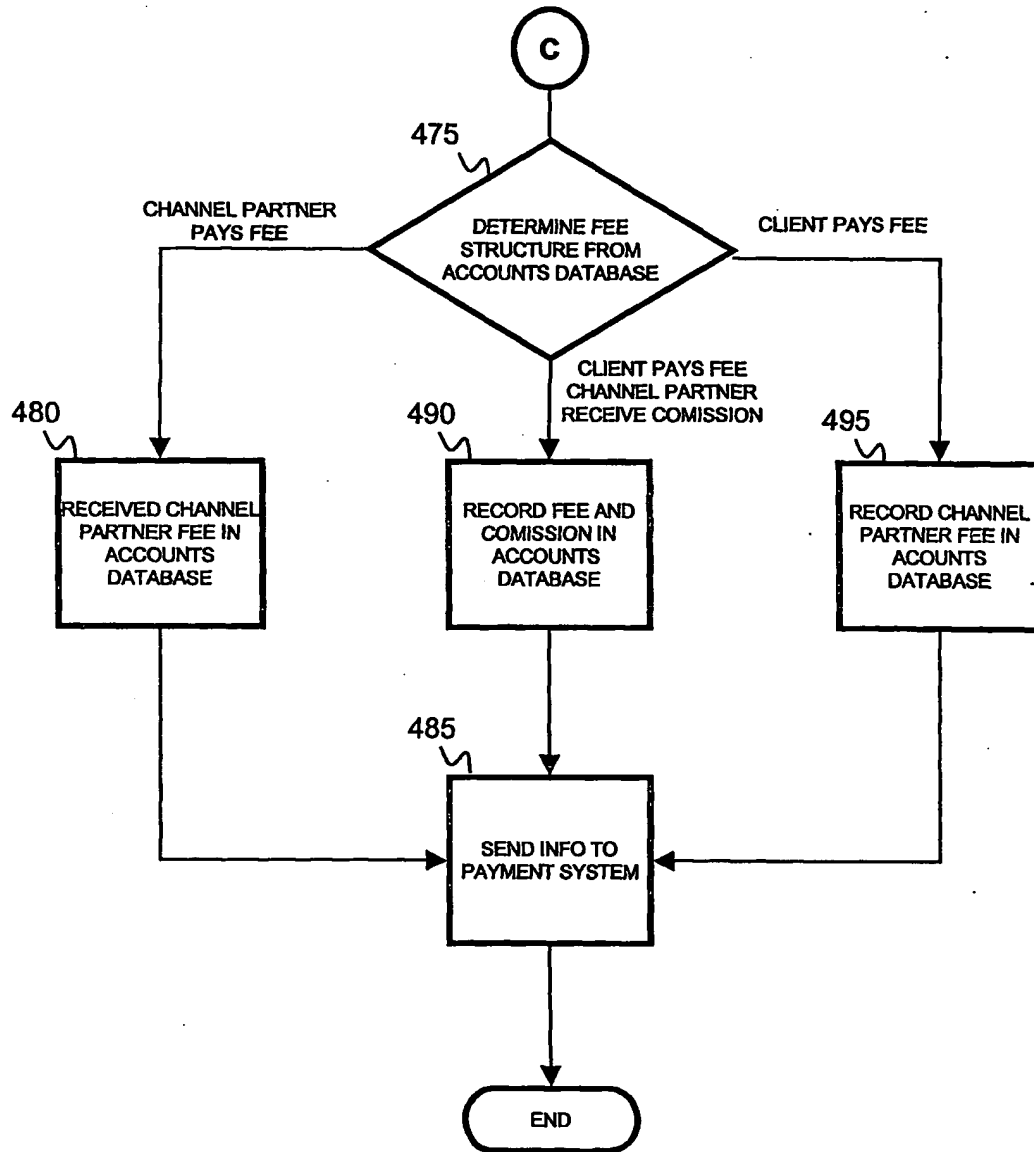


FIG. 7

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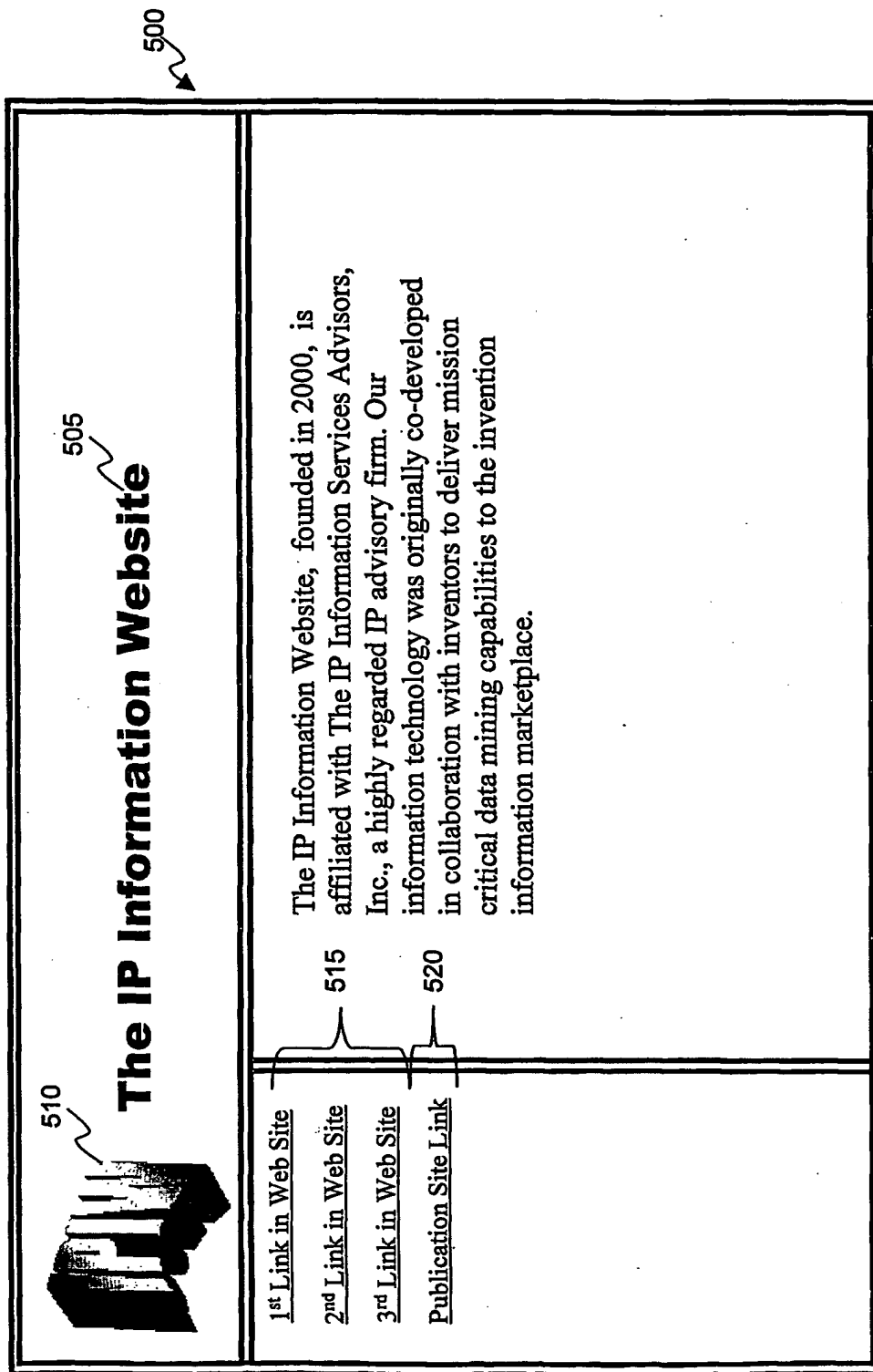


FIG. 8

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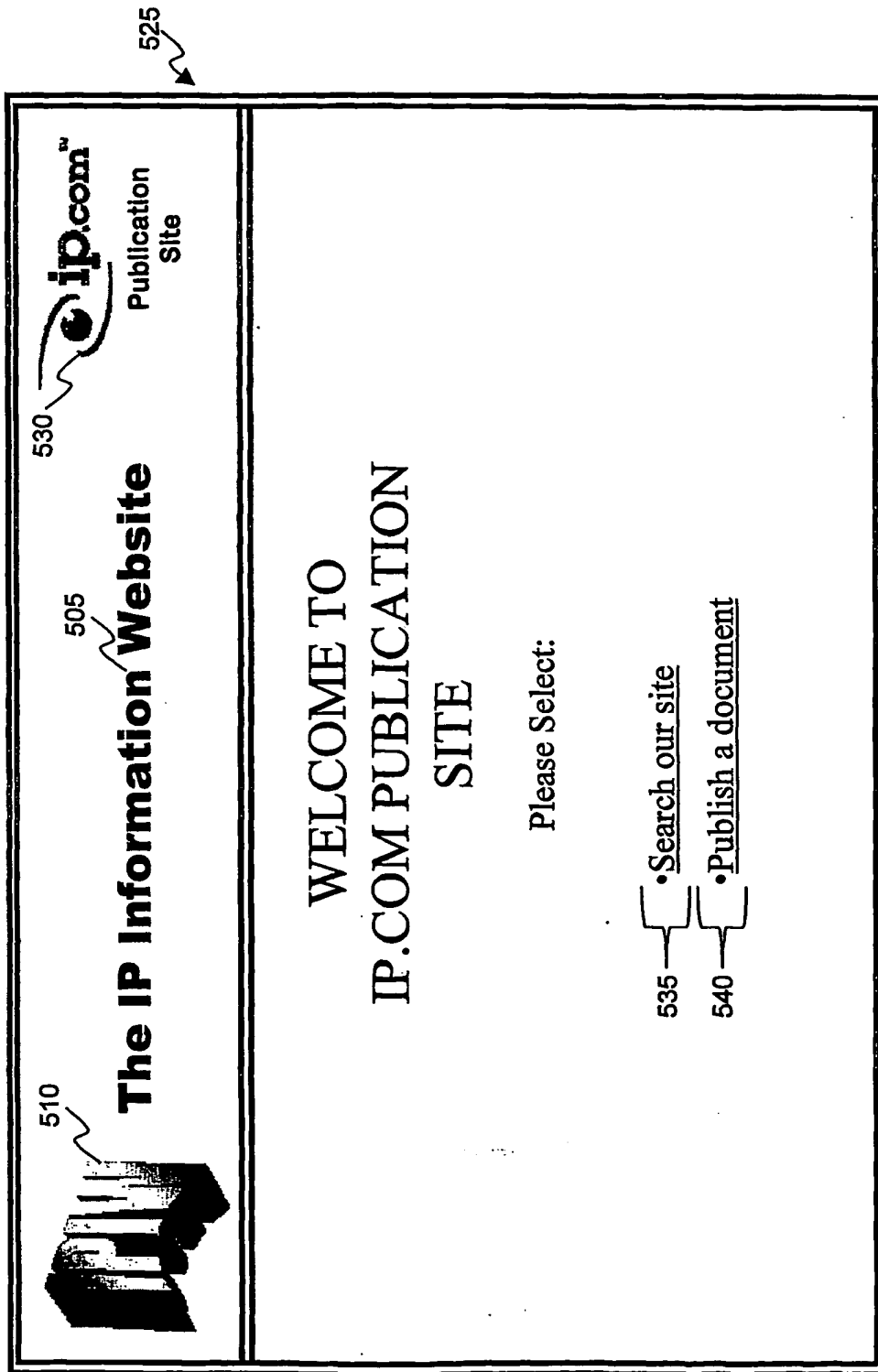


FIG. 9

10/14

545

510

505

The IP Information Website

530

550

Bicycle
Wheel

555

And Click Search

FIG. 10

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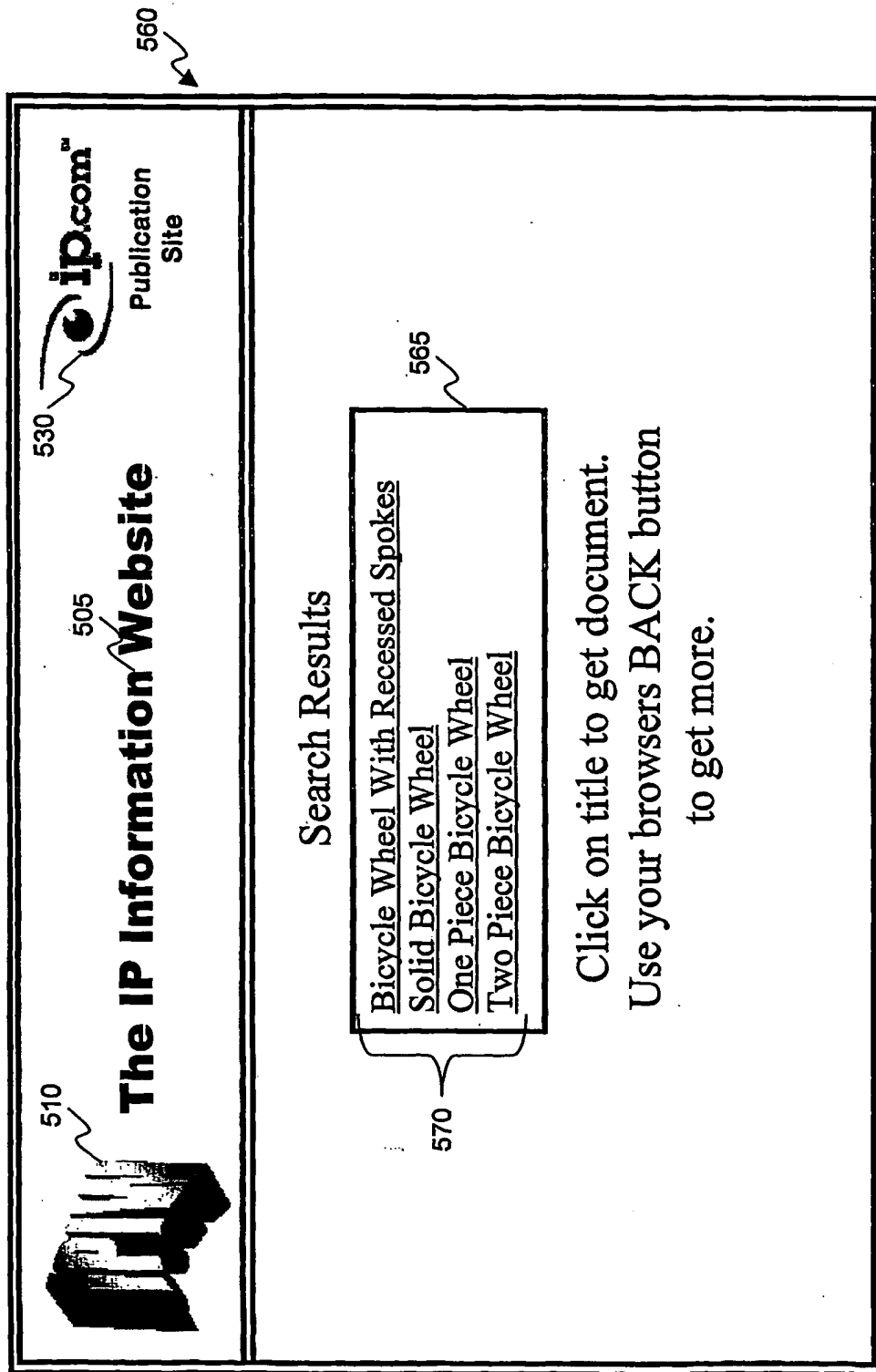


FIG. 11

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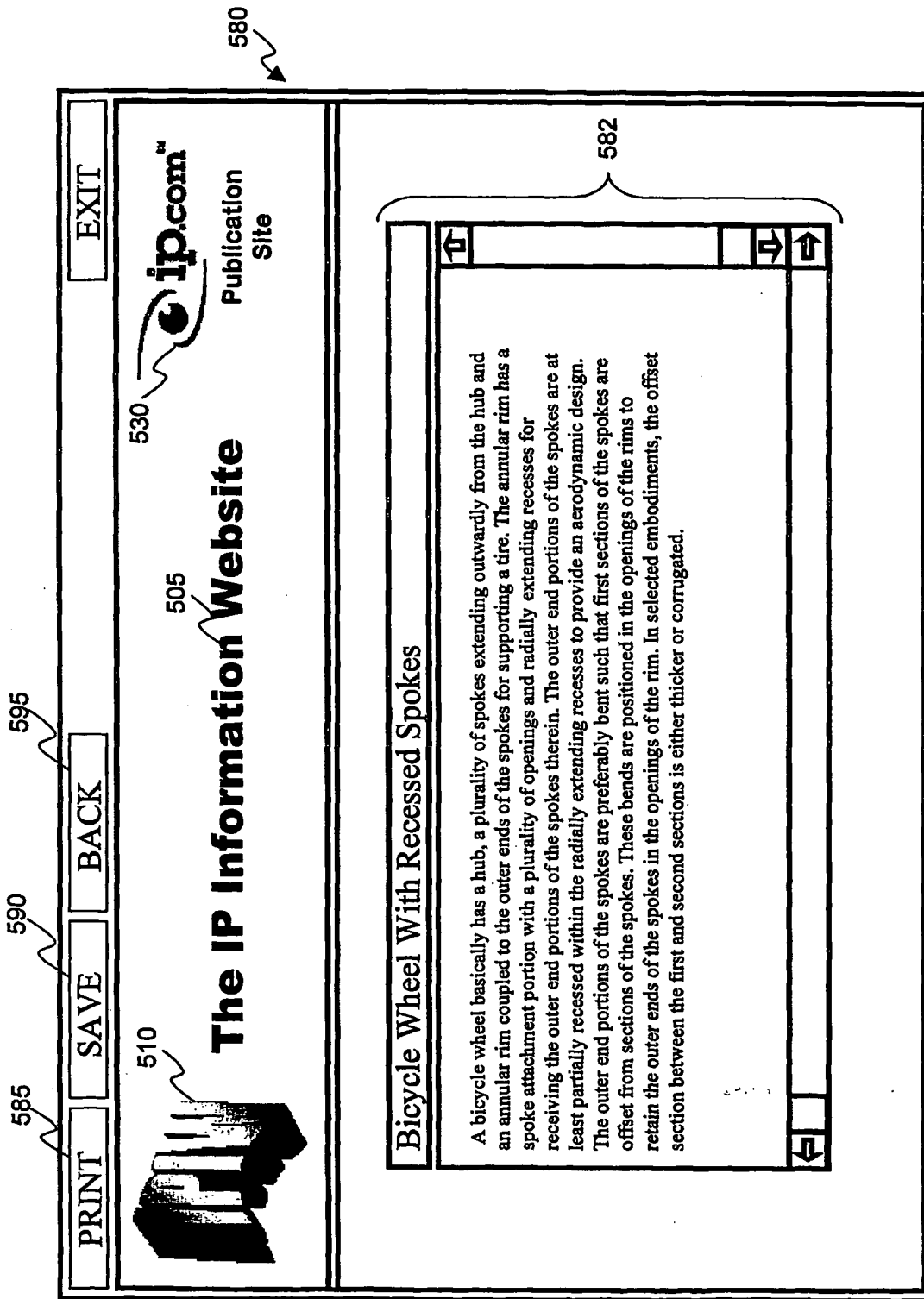




FIG. 12

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510  530  505 **The IP Information Website** 600 Publication Site

Please enter the following information:

605 Your Name	630 Document Title to be Published
John Doe	Bicycle Wheel With Solid Spokes
610 Your Address	635 Published By (if blank, will be published anonymously)
Anytown USA	
615 Your E-mail	640 File Path Name
JohnDoe@e-mail.com	C:\inventions\bicycle.txt
620 Your Phone	645 Press to Upload
555-555-1234	
625 Billing Information	
9999-1234-9876	

FIG. 13

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585 590 595

PRINT SAVE BACK EXIT

510

The IP Information Website

530 **ip.com**
Publication Site

505

650

Congratulations! Your document has been added to our database and is now a searchable document.

Title 655

Published By 660

Date of Publication 665

Link to Your Document 670

Publication Number 675

Use your browsers BACK button for additional documents.

FIG. 14

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US01/20971

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06F 17/30

US CL : 705/40

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/30, 705/27, 707/1, 707/3, 707/500, 283/42, 283/04

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
Please See Continuation Sheet**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 6,058,381 A (NELSON) 02 May 2000 (02.05.2000).	1-35
Y,P	US 6,134,552 A (FRITZ et al.) 17 October 2000 (17.10.2000).	1-35
Y	US 6,055,567 A (GANESAN et al.) 25 April 2000 (25.04.2000).	1-35
Y	Dewan, Rajiv; Marshall Freimer and Abraham Seidmann. "Portal Kombat: The Battle between Web Pages to become the Point of Entry to the World Wide Web." Proceedings of the 32nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences - 1999. ACM March 1999. Pages 1 -8.	1-35



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

30 August 2001 (30.08.2001)

Date of mailing of the international search report

30 OCT 2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

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Washington, D.C. 20231

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Authorized officer

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Telephone No. (703) 305-3900

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US01/20971

Continuation of B. FIELDS SEARCHED Item 3:

USPAT, US-PGPUB, EPO, JPO, DERWENT, IBM TDB Search terms: web publishing, fees, fee, charge, channel partner, internet, fee or commission